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NOTES ON THE DIALECT OF THE PEOPLE OF
NEWFOUNDLAND.

II.

At a meeting of the Montreal Branch of the American Folk-Lore Society on the 21st of May, 1893, I had the honor of reading a paper entitled "Notes on the Dialect of the People of Newfoundland," which afterward appeared in the Journal of American Folk-Lore. This was no more than it claimed to be, some notes on what may be called the folk-talk of the inhabitants of that island. It contained merely such information as might be gathered in two short visits, and was far from exhausting the subject. Since that time I have been making further inquiries, with the result of obtaining such additional information as will afford material for another paper.¹

In order to understand what follows, it is necessary to keep in view what I said at the commencement of my former paper as to the origin of this people. They are mostly descended from immigrants from Ireland or the west of England. In consequence, the present generation generally speak with an Irish accent, and some words will be found in use of Irish origin. Their coasts too having been from a very early period frequented by fishermen of all nations, and their trade bringing them in contact with people of other tongues, we might expect foreign words to be introduced into their speech. The accessions to their vocabulary from these sources, however, are very few, and their language remains almost entirely English. Even the peculiarities which strike a stranger are often survivals of old forms, which are wholly or partially obsolete elsewhere.

With these preliminary remarks, in considering the words since collected, I shall follow the order formerly adopted. I therefore notice:—

I. Those which are genuinely English, but are now elsewhere obsolete or only locally used.

An atomy or a *natomy*, a skeleton, applied to a person or creature extremely emaciated. "Poor John is reduced to *an atomy*." This is a contraction of the word anatomy, perhaps from a mistake of persons supposing the *a* or *an* to be the article. This use agrees with

¹ In these investigations, I must specially acknowledge the assistance received from Judge Bennett of Harbor Grace, N. F., who has not only furnished me with a number of words, but has carefully examined the whole list. I have also to acknowledge my obligations to an article by the Rev. Dr. Pilot of St. Johns, published in *Christmas Bells*, a paper issued in that city at Christmas. A few additional facts have been received from Mr. W. C. Earl of the Western Union Telegraph Company, and others. For most of the quotations I am indebted to the Encyclopedic Dictionary.

the original meaning of the word, which was not the act of dissecting, but the object or body to be dissected, and hence as the flesh was removed the skeleton. That word, however, then denoted a *dried* body or mummy (Greek, *skello*, to dry).

Oh tell me, friar, tell me,
In what part of this vile *anatomy*
Doth my name lodge? tell me that I may sack
The hateful mansion.

Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 3.

Oh that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth,
Then with a passion I would shake the world,
And rouse from sleep that fell *anatomy*
Which cannot hear a feeble lady's voice.

King John, iii. 4.

Hence it came to denote a person extremely emaciated.

They brought one Pinch, a hungry lean-faced villain,
A mere *anatomy*,
A living dead man.

Comedy of Errors, v. 1.

He also uses the abridged form *atomy* in the same sense, which is exactly the Newfoundland use of the word.

Thou starved bloodhound . . . thou *atomy*, thou.

2 Henry IV., v. 4.

The same word appears in Scotch.

They grew like atomies or skeletons." — Sermons affixed to Society's Contendings, quoted in Jameson's Dictionary.

Clavy is used to denote a shelf over the mantelpiece. Wright, Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English, gives it as denoting the mantelpiece itself, and thus it is still used in architecture. Halliwell, Dictionary of Archaisms, gives *clavel*, *clavy*, and *clavel piece* with the same meaning, and *clavel tack*, which he supposes means the shelf over the mantelpiece, the same as the *clavy* of the Newfoundlanders. In French we have *claveau*, the centrepiece of an arch.

Clean is universally used in the sense of completely, as frequently in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures (Ps. lxxvii. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 18, etc.) and as still in Scotch. "He is clean gone off his head." "I am clean used up." The word *clear* is sometimes used in the same sense.

Conkerbills, icicles formed on the eaves of houses and the noses of animals. Halliwell gives it in the form of *conkabell*, as Devonshire for an icicle.

Costive, costly. "That bridge is a *costive* affair." I had at first supposed this simply the mistake of an ignorant person, but in a tale

written in the Norfolk dialect I have seen *costyve* given in this sense, and I am informed that it is used in the same way in other counties of England.

Dotdtrel, an old fool in his dotage, or indeed a silly person of any age. It is usually spelled *dotterel*, and primarily denoted a bird, a species of plover. From its assumed stupidity, it being alleged to be so fond of imitation that it suffers itself to be caught while intent on mimicking the actions of the fowler, the term came to denote a silly fellow or a dupe.

Our *dotterel* then is caught.

He is, and just
As dotterels used to be; the lady first
Advanced toward him, stretched forth her wing, and he
Met her with all expressions.

Old Couplet, iii.

Dout, a contraction of "do out," to extinguish, and *douter*, an extinguisher, marked in the dictionaries as obsolete, but noted by Halliwell as still used in various provincial dialects of England.

First, in the intellect it *douts* the light. — Sylvester,

The dram of base
Doth all the noblest substance *dout*.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, i. 4.

Newfoundlanders also express the same idea by the phrase, "*make out the light.*"

Droke. In my former paper I mentioned this word, without being able to explain it properly. It denotes a sloping valley between two hills. When wood extends across it, it is called a *droke* of wood. In Old Norse there is a noun *drög*, a streak, also a noun *drag*, a soft slope or valley, which in another form, *drog*, is applied to the watercourse down a valley. Similar is the word *drock*, in Provincial English given by Halliwell as in Wiltshire a noun meaning a watercourse, and in Gloucester a verb, to drain with underground stone trenches.

Dunch cake or bread, unleavened bread, composed of flour mixed with water and baked at once. So Wright and Halliwell give *dunch-dumpling* as in Westmoreland denoting "a plain pudding made of flour and water."

Flankers, sparks coming from a chimney, so Halliwell gives it as meaning sparks of fire. In old English, when used as a verb, it denotes to sparkle.

Who can bide the *flanckering* flame
That still itself betrays.

Turbeville's Ovid, f. 83.

The noun is generally *flanke* or *flaunke* (Dan. *flunke*) a spark.

Felle *flaunkes* of fyr and flakes of soufre.

Early Eng. Allit. Poems, "Cleanness," 953.

Gossip, originally *Godsib*, from *God* and *sib*, meaning kin or relationship by religious obligation, is still quite commonly used in Newfoundland to denote a godparent. *Sib*, which in old English and Scotch denotes a relative by consanguinity, is used there exclusively to denote relationship formed by sponsorship.

Groaning cake. When a birth is expected, a cake is prepared called the *groaning cake*. Very soon after it occurs, with little regard to the feelings or nerves of the mother, a feast is made, particularly for the elderly women, of whom all in the neighborhood are present. This is called the "*bide-in*' feast," and at it the "groaning cake" is distributed, bearing the same relation to the occasion that "bride cake" does to a marriage feast. This is in accordance with old English practice and language, in which, according to Halliwell, *groaning* denotes lying-in. Hence we have in Scotch *groaning malt*, drink provided for the occasion, and in old English *groaning cheese*, *groaning chair*, and *groaning cake*. Judge Bennett supposes that the name of the feast is only the present participle of *bide*, and means staying or waiting.

Gulch. In my former paper I gave *gulch* as used in a peculiar sense on the Labrador coast, and among those frequenting it, but stated that I did not find it used in Newfoundland in its old English sense of to swallow. I have since learned that it is in use in this sense at Spaniards Bay and probably at other places on the coast.

Gurry, the offal of codfish, now obsolete, but by a euphuism represented in dictionaries as meaning "an alvine evacuation."

Hackle is used in two senses, and for two English words. The one is to cut in small notches, as to "hackle" the edge of the door. This is the same as the word to *hack*, defined "to cut irregularly, to notch with an imperfect instrument or in an unskilful manner." The other denotes the separating the coarse part of the flax from the fine by passing it through the teeth of an instrument called in Northumberland and Yorkshire a *hackle*, in Scotch a *heckle*. Hence the word came to mean to handle roughly or to worry, particularly by annoying questions. In Newfoundland *hackle* and *cross hackle* are especially applied to the questioning of a witness by a lawyer, when carried to a worrying degree. This is like the use of the word in Scotland, to denote the questioning at election times of a candidate for the House of Commons.

Haps, to hasp or fasten a door. This was the original Anglo-Saxon form *hapse* or *haps*. It is defined by Johnson as a noun, a

clasp folded over a staple and fastened on with a padlock, and as a verb, to fasten in this manner. Wright gives it as Berkshire for to fasten and Devonshire for the lower part of a half door. In Newfoundland it denotes to fasten in general.

Helve is the term universally used for an axe-handle, and as a verb it expresses the furnishing it with a handle.

Killock, an old English word used to denote a small anchor, partly of stone and partly of wood, still used by fishermen, but going out of use in favor of iron grapnels.

Leary, hungry, faint. This is the old English word *lear* or *leer*, in German *leer*, signifying empty or hollow, having its kindred noun *lereness*.

But at the first encounter downe he lay
The horse runs *leere* without the man.

Harrington's *Ariosto*, xxxv. 64.

Liveyer. In my last paper I gave this word as peculiar to the Labrador coast, denoting simply a resident, in contrast with those visiting it for fishing or other purposes. I find now that it is used on the coast of Newfoundland in the same sense. I learn also that for lover they say *loveyer*, as is done in some English provincial dialects. This, being from the Anglo-Saxon *lufian*, is nearer the original than the common form.

Logy, heavy and dull in respect of motion. Anglo-Saxon *liggan*, Dutch *logge*, a sluggard. In the United States the word is applied to men or animals, as a *logy* preacher or a *logy* horse. In Newfoundland, in like manner, they will speak of a *logy* vessel, a slow sailer, and in addition, when from want of wind a boat or vessel cannot get ahead or can only proceed slowly, they will speak of having a *logy* time.

Lun, a calm. This word exists in Scotch and northern English as *loun*. It also appears in Swedish as *lugn*, pronounced *lungn*, and in old Icelandic as *logn*, pronounced *loan*.

Mundel, a stick with a flat end for stirring meal when boiling for porridge. Wright gives it as used in Leicestershire as an instrument for washing potatoes, and he and Halliwell both give it as Northumberland, denoting a slice or stick used in making puddings. In Old Norse there is a word *möndull*, pronounced *mundull*, which means a handle, especially of a handmill, and the word is frequent in modern Icelandic.

Nesh, tender and delicate, used to describe one who cannot stand much cold or hard work. This is old English, but marked in the dictionaries as obsolete except in the midland counties of England; Halliwell adds Northumberland.

He was to *nesshe* and she too harde. — Gower, *C. A. V.*

It may be noted here that the people of Newfoundland use the word *twinly* with almost the same meaning. It is undoubtedly formed from twin like *twinling*, a diminutive, meaning a little twin, given by Wright as *twindling*.

In my former article I mentioned *nunch* as used for lunch. I may add here the word *nunny-bags*, originally meaning a lunch-bag, but now used in the general sense of a bag to carry all the articles deemed necessary in travelling.

Patienate, long-suffering. Wright gives it as used in Westmoreland in the same sense.

Perney, an adverb meaning presently or directly, as when a servant told to go and do a thing might reply "I *will perney*." The word I do not find in any dictionary to which I have access, but from cognate words I believe that it has come down from the old English. Related to it is the Latin adjective *pernix*, quick, nimble, active, and the old English word *pernicious*, signifying quick. Thus Milton :—

Part incentive reed
Provide *pernicious* with one touch of fire.
Paradise Lost, vi. 520.

Hence the noun *pernicity*, swiftness of motion which lingered longer. "Endued with great swiftness or *pernicity*," Ray on the Creation, 1691.

Piddle or *peddle* is used to describe dealing in a small way, without any reference to hawking or carrying goods round from house to house for sale. This was the old meaning of the word.

Quism, a quaint saying or conundrum. In Anglo-Saxon, from the verb *cwethan*, to say, comes *cwiss*, a saying. The Newfoundlanders have also the word *quisitise*, to ask questions of one, but it seems to be of different origin.

Roke or *roak*, smoke or vapor (Anglo-Saxon, *reocan*, to smoke), the same as reek in old English and Scotch. Thus Shakespeare :—

Her face doth *reek* and smoke. — *Venus and Adonis*, 555.

Still used poetically.

Culloden shall *reek* with the blood of the brave. — Campbell.

I had supposed that the word *ructions* was Irish and a corruption of insurrection. It is used in Newfoundland to denote noisy quarrellings. But Halliwell gives it as Westmoreland for an uproar, so that it is really old English.

Sewell, in old English a scarecrow, especially in order to turn deer. It generally consisted of feathers hung up, which by their fluttering scared those timid animals. The Red Indians of Newfoundland suspended from poles streamers of birch-bark for the same

purpose, and in old writings on Newfoundland I have seen the word. But as the present generation do not follow the practice, it is not now in general use.

Spell, from Anglo-Saxon *spelian*, means, in old English, as a verb, to supply the place of another, or to take a turn of work with him, and as a noun, the relief afforded by one taking the place of another at work for a time. In a similar sense it is used in Newfoundland, but there it is used specially to denote carrying on the back or shoulders. "He has just *spelled* a load of wood out," meaning, he has carried it on his back. It is also applied to distance: "How far did you carry that load?" Answer, "Three shoulder spells," meaning as far as one could carry without resting more than three times. I may notice that the word *turn* is used to denote what a man can carry. "He went into the country for a turn of wood," that is, as much as he can carry on his back. The Standard Dictionary mentions it as having also this meaning locally in the United States.

Swinge, the same as *singe*, regarded as obsolete, but preserved in various English provincial dialects, is the only form heard here. It is an ancient, if not the original form of the word. Thus Spenser says: —

The scorching flame sore *swingèd* all his face.

Till Tibs Eve, an old English expression, equivalent to the "Greek Kalends," meaning never. The origin of the phrase is disputed. The word *Tib* is said to have been a corruption of the proper name Tabitha. If so, the name of that good woman has been sadly profaned, for it came to signify a prostitute.

Every coistrel
That comes enquiring for his *tib*.
Shakespeare, *Pericles*.

But St. Tib is supposed by some to be a corruption of St. Ubes, which again is said to be a corruption of Setubal. This, however, gives no explanation of the meaning of the phrase, and there is really no saint of the name. To me the natural explanation seems to be, that from the utter unlikelihood of such a woman being canonized, persons would naturally refer to her festival as a time that would never come.

The use of *to*, as meaning this, as in *to-day*, *to-night*, and *to-morrow*, is continued in *to year* and *to once* for at once.

I may also notice that they use the old form *un* or *on* in the composition of words to denote the negative, where present usage has *in* or *im*, or changes the *n* or *m* to the letter following. Thus they say *unproper*, or *onproper*, *undecent*, *unlegal*, etc.

Yaffle, an armful, applied especially to gathering up the fish which

have been spread out to dry, a small yaffle denoting as many as can be held in the two hands, and a large yaffle, expressing what a man would encircle with his arms. The word is also used as a verb, meaning to gather them up in this manner. The Standard Dictionary gives it as used locally in the United States in this last sense. But the Newfoundlanders do not limit it to this. They will speak of a yaffle, *e. g.*, of crannocks. Wright and Halliwell give it as used in Cornwall as a noun denoting an armful.

Yarry, early, wide awake, as a yarry man or a yarry woman. Wright and Halliwell give this word spelled *yary* as Kentish, meaning sharp, quick, ready. They, however, give *yare* as another word, though almost if not quite identical in meaning. They are closely related, appearing in Anglo-Saxon as *gearu* or *gearo*, and in kindred languages in various forms. In old English *yare* is used as an adjective meaning ready.

This Tereus let make his ships *yare*. — Chaucer, *Legend of Philomene*.

It is applied to persons meaning ready, quick.

Be *yare* in thy preparation. — Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, iii. 4.

And as an adverb, meaning quickly.

Yare, yare, good Iris, quick. — Ibid., *Anthony and Cleopatra*, v. 9.

II. I have next to notice words still in general use, but used by the Newfoundlanders in a peculiar sense, this being sometimes the old or primary signification.

To many the most singular instance of this kind will be the use of the term *bachelor* women. Yet, as in Newfoundland, it originally denoted an unmarried person of either sex.

He would keep you
A *bachelor* still,
And keep you not alone without a husband
But in a sickness.

Ben Jonson.

Scarcely less strange may appear the application of the term *barren* both to males and females. In the distribution of poor relief a complaint may be heard, "He is a barren man, and I have three children." So the word seems to have been understood by the translators of King James's version of the Bible. Deut. vii. 14: "There shall not be male or female barren among you."

Boughten, applied to an article, is used to signify that it has not been manufactured at home. The same use of the word was common in New England.

Bridge, pronounced *brudge*, is the word commonly used to denote

a platform, though the latter word is known or coming into use, but they generally pronounce it *flatform*.

Brief. A curious use of the word *brief* is to describe a disease which quickly proves fatal, "The diphtheria was very brief there," that is, it quickly ran its course ; the person soon died of it.

In several dictionaries (Standard, Halliwell, Webster, etc.) this word is given as meaning "rife, common, prevalent," and is represented as specially applied to epidemic diseases. They also refer to Shakespeare as authority without giving quotations. Bartlett represents it as much used in this sense by the uneducated in the interior of New England and Virginia. Murray, in the New English Dictionary, gives the same meaning, but doubtingly, for he adds, "The origin of this sense is not clear. The Shakespearean quotation is generally cited as an example, but is by no means certain." I presume to think that the assigning this meaning is altogether a mistake. By no rule of language can *brief* be made to mean rife. We see at once, however, the expressiveness of the word as applied in the Newfoundland sense to an epidemic as making short work of its victims. I must regard this, therefore, as the original meaning of the word in this application. At the same time we can see how the mistake may have arisen. An epidemic disease so malignant as to prove fatal quickly could scarcely but become prevalent where introduced, and its prevalence being on the minds of men, they would be apt to attach such a meaning to the description of its working, as *brief*, and then use the word in that sense.

Similar to this is the use of the word *late*, applied to a woman lately married. "The late Mrs. Prince visited us," meaning the lady who had recently become Mrs. Prince.

Chastise is used not as particularly meaning to punish either corporally or otherwise, but to train for good. A father will ask the person to whom he is intrusting his son to chastise him well, meaning merely bring him up in a good way. But the more limited signification is coming into use.

Child. In my former paper I mentioned the use of the word *child* to denote a female child. In two instances I have since heard of its being used in this sense some years ago in Nova Scotia. The one was by an old man originally from the United States, who used Shakespeare's inquiry, "a boy or a child." Again, in a town settled by New Englanders, I am informed by one brought up in it, that when he was a boy some forty years ago, it was a favorite piece of badinage with young people to address a young husband on the birth of his first-born, "Is it a boy or a child?" They did not know the meaning of the phrase, but used it in the way of jeering at his simplicity, as if he had not yet been able to decide the question.

This is an example of the manner in which words or phrases, after losing their original meaning, still continue to be used and receive a different sense.

Draft or *draught*, in old English and still in the Provinces, means a team of horses or oxen, and also that drawn by them, a load. As the Newfoundlanders generally had no teams, they have come to use it to denote a load for two men to carry, hence two quintals of codfish.

Dredge, pronounced in Newfoundland *drudge*, is used to denote the sprinkling of salt over herring when caught, and mixing them together to preserve them in the mean time. It is the same word that is used in cookery to denote sprinkling flour on meat, for which we still have the *dredging box*. Skeat (Etym. Dictionary) gives a general meaning to sprinkle, as in sowing *dreg* or *dredge*, mixed corn, oats, and barley.

In connection with this they have the *dredge barrow*, pronounced *drudge barrow*, a barrow with handles and a trough to hold salt, for carrying the fish from the boat to the splitting table.

Driver is the old English word for a four-cornered fore and aft sail attached to the mizzenmast of a vessel, now usually known as the spanker. It is now used in Newfoundland to denote a small sail at the stern of their fishing punts or boats. The rig, I am informed, was common among the fishermen of England and Jersey.

Duckies. Twilight is expressed as "between the *duckies*," an expression which seems closely to resemble the Hebrew phrase "between the two evenings." So *duckish*, meaning dark or gloomy, which Wright and Halliwell give as Devonshire for twilight. We may add here that the break of day is expressed as the *crack o' the daanin*.

Lolly. This word I have formerly mentioned as used by Newfoundlanders, as by the people on the northern coast of America, and by Arctic explorers, to denote ice broken up into small pieces, nearly the same as described in my last paper as called by the former *swish* or *sish* ice. They have, however, another use of the word, so far as I know, peculiar to themselves, that is, to express a calm. In this respect it seems related to the word *lull*. Indeed, Judge Bennett thinks that it should be written *lully*.

Lot, the same as *allot*, to forecast some future event. Wright and Halliwell give it as Westmoreland for *imagine*, and the Standard Dictionary represents it as used in the United States as meaning to count upon, to pleasantly anticipate. The word *low*, which I deem a contraction of *allow*, is used in virtually the same sense. "I *low* the wind will be to the eastward before morning." The word *allow* is used in some parts of Nova Scotia as meaning intention or

opinion. "I allow to go to town to-morrow." The Standard Dictionary represents it as colloquially used in this sense in the United States, particularly in the Southern States.

Main is used as an adverb, meaning very, exceedingly. A Newfoundlander will say, "I am *main* sorry," that is, exceedingly sorry. This use of the word still appears in various provincial dialects of England. The word *fair* is also used in much the same way.

Nippers, half mitts or half gloves used to protect the fingers in hauling the cod-lines.

The word *ordain* is in common use, and is applied to matters in ordinary business of life. Thus a man will say, "I *ordained* that piece of wood for an axe helve." This seems to be the retention of its original use, before it came to be set apart for the more solemn objects to which it is now applied. Similar to this is its use in Devonshire, according to Wright and Halliwell, as meaning to order or to intend.

The word *proper* is in very common use to describe a handsome, well-built man. This is old English usage, as in Heb. xi. 23 : "He was a *proper* child." So in Scotch —

Still my delight is with *proper* young men. — Burns, *Jolly Beggars*.

Resolute is used in the sense of resolved. "I am *resolute* to go up the bay next week," meaning simply that I have made up my mind to that step. This was the original meaning of the word, but the transition was easy to its expressing a spirit of determination, boldness, or firmness.

The word *ridiculous* is used to describe unfair or shameful treatment without any idea of the ludicrous. "I have been served most ridiculous by the poor commissioner," was the statement of a man who wished to express in strong terms his sense of the usage he had received. Halliwell says that in some counties of England it is used to denote something very indecent and improper. Thus, a violent attack on a woman's chastity is called very ridiculous behavior, and an ill-conducted house may be described as a very ridiculous one.

Smoochin, hair-oil, or pomade. A young man from abroad, commencing as clerk in an establishment at one of the outposts, was puzzled by an order for a "pen'orth of smoochin." The verb *smooch* is also used as equivalent to smutch, to blacken or defile. We may hear such expressions as, "His clothes are smooched with soot," or, "The paper is smooched with ink." But it is also used to express the application of any substance as by smearing, without any reference to blackening. Thus one might say, "Her hair was all smooched with oil."

The term *trader* is limited to a person visiting a place to trade, in contrast with the resident merchant.

The mistress of a household disturbed in the midst of her house-cleaning will describe herself as *all in an uproar*. The word now denotes *noisy* tumult. But it originally meant simply confusion or excitement.

His eye . . .

Unto a greater *uproar*, tempts his veins.

Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 427.

Halliwell gives it as in Westmoreland meaning confusion or disorder, and so a Newfoundland lady uses it. But she has quite a vocabulary to express the same thing. She has her choice among such phrases as, *all in a reeraw*, *all in a floption*, or *all in a rookery*. The last word, however, is given by Wright and Halliwell as in the south of England denoting a disturbance or scolding.

The word *weather*, beside the usual nautical uses to signify to sail to windward of, and to bear up under and come through, as a storm, is used to signify foul weather, or storm and tempest according to an old meaning, now marked as obsolete, or only used in poetry. Thus Dryden, —

What gusts of *weather* from that darkening cloud
My thoughts portend.

I have observed also that some words are used in the same sense as in Scotch. This is seen in the use of the preposition *into* for *in*. "There is nothing *into* the man," or as the Scotch would say, "*intill* him." So *aneist*, meaning near or nearest. Then the verb *vex* is used to denote sorrow or grief rather than worry. "I am *vexed* for that poor man," a Newfoundlander or a Scotchman might say, though I judge that it expresses grief arising to such a degree as deeply to disturb the mind. It is used in the same sense by Shakespeare, —

A sight to *vex* the father's soul withal. — *Titus Andronicus*, v. 1.

In one passage of the Authorized Version of the Bible (Isa. lxiii. 10), it is used to translate a Hebrew word everywhere else rendered grieve. So the words *fine* and *finely*, to mean very much or very good. "We enjoyed ourselves *fine*." "How are you to-day?" "Oh, I'm *fine*." "He is doing *finely*." This usage could not have been acquired by intercourse with the Scotch, as there are very few such on the island out of St. John's. The last two words are from the Latin, and came into old English through the French, from which the use must have been separately derived.

III. I will now notice a number of words and phrases of a miscellaneous character that have been introduced in various ways, or

have arisen among the people through the circumstances of their lives.

I have already mentioned that though a large proportion of the population are of Irish descent, so as to affect the accent of the present generation, yet their dialect draws few words from this source. There are, however, a few such. Thus we can scarcely mistake the origin of the use of the term *entirely* at the end of a sentence to give force to it. Then *path*, pronounced with the hard Irish *th*, was applied to a road or even the streets of a town. Not long ago one might hear in St. Johns of the "lower *pat-h*" or the "upper *pat-h*." So the use of the term *gaffer*, a contraction of *grandfer*, itself a corruption of *grandfather*, as applied to children only, must have been derived from Ireland, in some parts of which it is common. From that quarter also came, if I mistake not, the use of the term *boys* in addressing men. It is used indeed to some extent elsewhere. English commanders, either of vessels or soldiers, use it when addressing their men in affectionate familiarity. Shakespeare also has it: "Then to sea, boys," "Tempest," ii. 2. But the usage is specially characteristic of the Irish, and in Newfoundland it is universal, in whatever men are employed, whether on board a vessel or working on land. I believe that the use of the word *rock* to denote a stone of any size, even a pebble thrown by a boy, which is universal in this island, is from the same quarter.

From the long time that the French have been fishing on this coast, we might have expected that the language of the residents would have received accessions from them. We find, however, only one or two words that we can trace to this source. On the west coast they have the word *Fackatar*, a corruption of *Facque à terre*, Jack ashore, a name given to a Frenchman who has deserted his vessel and is living an unsettled life ashore, and indeed to any French Canadian from the St. Lawrence visiting that part of the island. The word *please* is used as an Englishman would say: "I beg your pardon, what did you say?" But this is simply the translation of the French *platt-il*.

We would scarcely have expected to find their speech set off by importations from the classics. But some words seem to be of Latin origin. In the prices current in the newspapers one may see fish distinguished as *tol squolls* or *tal squals* and quoted at certain figures. This denotes fish bought and sold without assorting or culling, just as they come. Dr. Pilot suggests that the word is a corruption of the Latin *talis qualis*, such as it is, and it is likely that he is correct.

Another word which he regards as of classic origin is *longer*. This he supposes a contraction of the Latin *longurius*. I do not

think it necessary to go beyond the English language to account for the formation of the word. At all events, it is used in Newfoundland to denote a pole, of length according to circumstances, stretched across an open space. Thus they have *flake longers*, the horizontal pieces in flakes, on which boughs are laid to form the bed on which fish are placed to dry, *fence-longers*, small pickets or rods between the fence rails, and *stage-longers*, from five to seven inches in diameter, forming the floor or platform of the fishing stage.

There is another word in common use which seems to me to have a Latin origin, that is *quiddaments*, which means the things necessary to take with one in traveling. It appears to me simply a corruption of *impedimenta*.

There is a word common in names on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador to which I must advert. It is the word *tickle*, used to denote a narrow passage of some length, usually between an island and the mainland, sometimes large enough to afford shelter for vessels and sometimes so small as to be navigable only by boats. On the east coast of Newfoundland there are six or eight such places, known by particular appellations, as North Tickle, Main Tickle, etc.; and the coast-pilot notes over a dozen such places on the Labrador coast. We have other names formed from them, as Tickle Point or Tickle Bay. In two or three instances in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick we have such a place known sometimes as a *tickle*, but commonly as a *tittle*, which I deem a corruption of it. I have never seen a conjecture as to the meaning or origin of the word, but myself proposed the following explanation.¹ The first explorers of the coast referred to were the Portuguese, who gave names to the leading places on these shores, a number of which remain to the present day. A large proportion of these were the names of places in Portugal or the Western Islands, from which they carried on much of their trade. Now on the coast of Portugal may be seen a point called Santa Tekla. It is a narrow projection some miles in length, inside of which is a lengthy basin, narrowed by an island. As there were few good harbors on the coast of that country, this formed a favorite resort for shelter particularly to her fishermen. What more natural than that they should give the name to places here of similar appearance and serving the same purpose? The slight change from Tekla to Tickle will not appear strange to any person who knows into what different forms foreign words have been changed when adopted by Englishmen.

From the people of Newfoundland being so largely engaged in seafaring they have many technical terms, some of which are common among sailors, but some of which are either peculiar to them-

¹ *Transactions of Royal Society of Canada*, viii. (2) 144.

selves or used in a peculiar way. In my last paper I gave the word *scandalize* as heard among Newfoundland seamen, but not common. I now find that it is a regular nautical term. Thus the Standard Dictionary defines it as follows: "Naut. to trice up the tack and the head or peak of (a sail) in order to reduce its area." And Knight, in his "Voyage of the Falcon," represents the master as giving orders to "*scandalize* the mainsail."

Then they have the word *lobscouse*, originally *lobs course*, as in "Peregrine Pickle," still further contracted into *scouse*, a sailor's dish, consisting of salt meat stewed with vegetables and ship's biscuits. To this they give the name *scoff*, which seems related to the verb *scoff* given as a slang nautical term, meaning to eat voraciously. (See Standard Dictionary.)

An odd phrase among them is *Solomon Goss's birthday*. It is applied to Tuesdays and Fridays as pudding-days, when at the seal or cod fishing. What is the origin of it, or whether it is peculiar to the people of Newfoundland, I cannot ascertain.

But I would especially note the technical terms connected with their fishing. From the intercourse of the fishermen of different countries some terms become common among them, though others seem peculiar to this people. Thus *flaik* or *flake*, is an old English word for a paling or hurdle. In old Icelandic it appears as *flaki* or *fleki*, especially a hurdle or shield of wicker work, used for defense in battle (Vigfussen, Icel. Dict.). Webster gives it as "Massachusetts for a platform of slats of wands or hurdles, supported by stanchions for drying fish." But it has long been used in this sense in Newfoundland and the adjoining coasts of British America, and it is now admitted into the dictionaries as a good English word.

In my last paper I mentioned *growler* as a name given to small icebergs. In explanation of the term, I learn that through the melting of the part under water they lose their equilibrium, and sometimes even a little noise will cause them to turn over with a sound like a growl. Hence the name. Driven by high winds they acquire such a momentum that they carry destruction to any vessel crossing their course. One season so many accidents occurred from them that it was known as the year of the growlers. I may add that the word *swatching*, given in my last as denoting watching open holes in the ice to shoot seals, is simply a corruption of *seal watching*.

Among the peculiar words connected with the fishing I note the following: a *downer*, a sudden heavy squall of wind; *sunker*, a breaker; *roughery*, a heavy sea on, and *pelt*, usually and perhaps in the seal fishing always denoting the skin of the animal with the fat attached, though in hunting it may be used to denote the skin of any fur-bearing animal. *Voyage* is used to express not their passage from one

place to another, but the result of their trip. A good voyage is one in which they have been successful in their object, whether fishing or trading, and a bad voyage the reverse.

I mentioned in my last a number of peculiar terms used in seal hunting. I would now add that they have a number of words not only to distinguish the species of seals, as *harps*, *hoods*, and *dogheads*, but to mark the difference of age and condition. Thus the young or baby-seals till they leave the ice are known as *whitecoats*. When the pelt, that is the skin and fat together, does not weigh more than twenty-five pounds, it is called a *cat*, and a dwarf-seal, a fat little fellow, is called a *jar*.

The most curious use, however, of a word in this connection is that of *bedlamer*. The word originated with a class of vagabonds in the Middle Ages, known at first as "bedlam beggars," so called because when released from Bedlam hospital they were licensed to beg. They are referred to by Shakespeare as pilgrim beggars, but were commonly known as Toms o' Bedlam. They were also called bedlamites and *bedlamers*, which came to be generic terms for fools of all classes. The last is used in Newfoundland with two applications: (1) It denotes a seal one year old and half grown, which being immature is of little value, and (2), it is applied rather contemptuously to young fellows between 16 and 20. Where we would apply to them such a term as hobbledehoy, a Newfoundlander would always call them *bedlamers*. Judge Bennett says "I have often had them so described in court. A policeman will say there were a lot of *bedlamers* standing at the corner, and the accused was one of them," etc. There is sufficient resemblance between the two classes to account for the use of the same name, but how this came first to be applied to either does not appear.

A curious custom is described in the phrase a *press pile compass*. A *press pile* is fish piled up to make, and a *press pile compass* is a trick played on a green hand of sending him to the next neighbor to borrow the press pile compass. The party applied to has not one to spare and sends him to the next, and so on as on April fool's day.

The fishermen of Newfoundland have a fishing-boat known as a *jack*, said to be peculiar to that island. It is from seven to fifteen tons' burden. The deck has open standing spaces forward and aft for the fishermen to stand in while they fish. The deck is formed of movable boards. It is schooner-rigged, but without either fore or main boom. The foresail is trimmed aft by a sheet, and the main-sail trimmed aft to horns or pieces of wood projecting from the quarters. It thus avoids the danger of either of the booms knocking the fishermen overboard. I cannot ascertain the origin of the name, but it is believed that it was brought from either England or Ireland.

In my last I mentioned *barber* as used to denote a sharp cutting wind driving small particles of congealed moisture, which strike the face in a painful manner. Since that time there have been discussions on the word in some of the newspapers of Canada. It appears that on some of the coasts of the provinces, it is used to denote a vapor that rises in a certain state of the atmosphere, and this sense of it is given in the Standard Dictionary. In Newfoundland, however, I am assured that it has always the idea connected with it of a cold wind driving the particles of ice in a way, as it were, to "shave" one's face.

Being so much engaged with the sea, all their expressions are apt to be colored by life on that element. Thus a person going visiting will speak of going *cruising*, and girls coming to the mainland to hire as servants will talk of *shipping* for three months, or whatever time they propose to engage.

Independent of the sea, however, they have a number of words which seem to have been formed among themselves, some of which may be regarded as slang, but which are in common use. I notice the following, *bangbelly*, a low and coarse word denoting a boiled pudding consisting of flour, molasses, soda, etc., and not uncommonly seal-fat instead of suet. I think we need hardly go searching for the origin of the name *chin* or *cheek music*, singing at dances, where they have no fiddle or accordion, as often happens among the fishermen; *elevenner*, given by Halliwell as in Sussex denoting a luncheon, but in Newfoundland meaning a glass of grog taken at eleven o'clock, when the sun is over the fore yard; *gum bean*, a chew of tobacco; *ear winkers*, flannel coverings for the ears in winter; *ramporous*, a sort of slang term, describing parties as very angry and excited. Yet it seems well formed English, having its root-word *ramp*, and being kindred with *rampage*, *rampant*, *rampacious* or *rampageous*, with the last of which it is nearly synonymous; and *locksy*, regarded as a corruption of *look see*, but probably the first part is a form of the Anglo-Saxon *loke*, according to Halliwell, meaning to look upon, to guard, to take care of. We may here add that raisins are universally known as *figs* and figs as *broad figs*. How this originated I cannot ascertain.

A large proportion of the people of Newfoundland being uneducated, persons trying to use fine English words often substitute one for another somewhat alike in sound but totally different in meaning. Sometimes these are as ludicrous as any that have appeared under the name of Mrs. Partington. Dr. Pilot has given a number of instances of this kind, as *bigamous* for bigoted, meaning obstinate in his opinions, *circus court* for circuit court, *commodation* for recommendation, as for example, a servant's character. And we have

heard of a good janitor of a church having his feelings hurt by being obliged to use *antichrist* (anthracite) coal. Then there are words variously mangled in the pronunciation by the ignorant, as *dismolish* for demolish, and *nonsical* for nonsensical. Such a use of words is generally very limited, perhaps not extending beyond a single individual. In any case they are simply the blunders of the ignorant, and unless commonly adopted are of little interest to the student. Sometimes a word does thus come into use, as may be seen in the word *expensibler* for expensive.

In Newfoundland the quintal from the Spanish or Portuguese is used as the standard of weight for codfish, as it is generally in North America. Dr. Pilot supposes that by a corruption of this word the people of that island have given us the phrase "a pretty kettle of fish." I think that this is an entire mistake, and that the phrase originated with the word *kiddle*, an old English word for a weir or trap of basket or wicker work set usually at the mouth of small streams, incorrectly pronounced *kittle*. I cannot hear of this being in use in Newfoundland, and therefore believe that the phrase originated elsewhere.

IV. There are several words which I have not found elsewhere and of which I am unable to explain the origin or relations. I note the following: *baiser*, applied by boys fishing to a large trout. When such is caught, a common exclamation is, "Oh, that's a *baiser*;" *ballacarda*, ice about the face, also ice along the foot of a cliff touching the water; *covel*, a tub made to hold blubber or oil; *crannocks* on the west coast, *crunnocks* to the north, small pieces of wood for kindling; *the diddies*, nightmare; *gly*, a sort of trap made with a barrel-hoop, with net interwoven, and hook and bait attached, set afloat to catch gulls, and other marine birds known as *ticklases* and *steerins*, but what species is meant by the last two names I have not ascertained; *jinker*, there is such a word in modern English, connected with jink, denoting a lively, sprightly girl or a wag, but among the Newfoundlanders the word must have had a different origin, as with them it means an unlucky fellow, one who cannot or does not succeed in fishing; *old teaks* and *jannies*, boys and men who turn out in various disguises and carry on various pranks during the Christmas holidays, which last from 25th December to old Christmas day, 6th January; *pelm*, any light ashes such as those from burnt cotton, cardboard, also the light dust that rises from wood, and some kinds of coal-ashes; *towtents*, pork cakes made of pork chopped fine and mixed with flour; and *willigiggin*, half between a whisper and a giggle.

I may notice some idiomatic phrases. *Stark naked tea* is tea without milk or sweetening, or *sweetness* as the fishermen call it, molasses

being known as *long sweetness* and sugar as *short sweetness*. *Put away a thing too choice* is to lay it aside so carefully as not to be able to find it. To *pay one's practice* is to pay the accustomed dues to the minister or doctor. A *scattered few* is a very few, and a *smart few* is a great many. *Put your handsignment to it* is to sign your name to it, and *overright* is for opposite or against. Quite an expressive phrase is *getting into collar* to denote working on a ship preparatory to sailing either for seal or cod fishing. A curious one of which I can get no explanation is *she'd lick her cuff*, that is, submit to any humiliation, to be let go to a dance or secure what object she has in view. Occasionally there is something poetic in their expressions, as when the land is described as just *mourning for manure*.

In these two papers I am far from having exhausted the subject, but I believe that they will be sufficient to show that in the peculiarities of Newfoundland speech we have an interesting field of inquiry. Here is a people living in a secluded position, but retaining words and forms of speech brought by their fathers from England, which elsewhere have passed away entirely, or are preserved only as provincialisms in some limited districts. In this quarter the study of these has been neglected hitherto. Persons laying claim to education have regarded them simply as vulgarisms, and have expressed some surprise that I should have deemed them worthy of thoughtful investigation. They could scarcely conceive that the rude speech of unlettered fishermen was really part of the language of Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer. What I have done will, I trust, stimulate further inquiry, and that without delay. Education and intercourse with people of other lands will soon modify if not entirely wear away these peculiarities. It is to be hoped, therefore, that while the opportunity lasts there will be found among those having intercourse with them, persons to prosecute the inquiry farther, and to seek to gather the fullest information on a subject interesting in itself, but especially so as bearing on the past of our English mother-tongue.

George Patterson.

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